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ABSTRACT

This report presents a blueprint for attracting, developing, and retaining skilled and diverse teachers who effectively increase the achievement of all of Virginia's students. The five recommendations are to: (1) develop a comprehensive database to support Virginia's commitment to teacher quality; (2) expand recruitment initiatives to attract competent, caring, and qualified teachers; (3) provide high quality teacher preparation programs for every teacher candidate; (4) expand efforts to develop and retain high quality teachers; and (5) conduct research to design and evaluate teacher quality initiatives. For each recommendation, the report describes the current status, strategies for implementing the recommendation, and outcomes. (Contains 36 references.) (SM)

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Stepping Up to the Plate...

Virginia's Commitment to a Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom

A Report from the Committee to Enhance the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia

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Stepping Up to the Plate... Virginia's Commitment to a Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom

A Report from the Committee to Enhance the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia
October 16, 2002

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The purpose of the Joint Task Force on the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia, established in 2000 by the Board of Education (BOE) and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), was to develop recommendations for enhancing the teaching profession. Co-chaired by a member of the BOE and SCHEV and with broad participation of all education constituencies, the Joint Task Force presented a draft report to the full membership of the BOE and SCHEV in June 2001. The Joint Task Force recommended the establishment of a permanent advisory body consisting of policymakers and constituent groups to develop and implement a comprehensive state plan to ensure a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. Based on this recommendation, the ***Committee to Enhance the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia*** was constituted.

"Teaching is a valued profession that attracts, develops, and retains skilled, talented, and diverse individuals who effectively advance learning for all students."

Stepping Up to the Plate....
Virginia's Commitment to a Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom

A report from the Committee to Enhance the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia

The goal of the report of the Committee to Enhance the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia is to present a coherent, comprehensive blueprint to attract, develop, and retain skilled, talented, and diverse individuals who effectively increase the achievement of all students in Virginia. The report includes a clear, strong case supporting the need for this comprehensive blueprint and consists of five recommendations. Included with each recommendation are strategies for implementation and expected outcomes.

BLUEPRINT SUMMARY
(recommendations and strategies)

Recommendation One: Develop a Comprehensive Database to Support Virginia's Commitment to Teacher Quality

- Collect data on the qualifications of Virginia schoolteachers and paraprofessionals.
- Collect data that will enable schools and divisions to better understand how to affect teacher retention and effectiveness.
- Access data on the supply of potential teachers.
- Collect data that will enable institutions of higher education and schools and divisions to more effectively predict and respond to potential shortage areas.
- Collect data that will support research efforts to enhance teacher education programs and explore the links between teacher effectiveness and student achievement.
- Require teachers to provide accurate, timely, and current information.

Recommendation Two: Expand Recruitment Initiatives to Attract Competent, Caring, and Qualified Teachers

- Develop and implement a statewide marketing plan to attract prospective new candidates and highly qualified teachers into the teaching profession in Virginia.
- Develop a statewide Job Bank and Electronic Hiring Hall that will enable teachers from around the world to post their credentials and inquire about position openings.
- Create partnerships between institutions of higher education and school divisions to develop structured "grow your own" Teach for Tomorrow programs for middle and high school students to explore and enter careers in education.
- Expand and increase support for incentive programs for students who want to teach in one of Virginia's critical shortage areas, males who wish to teach in the elementary or middle grades, and people of color in all teaching fields.
- Expand and increase initiatives for alternative pathways to teaching.
- Fund compensation and benefits for teachers that will attract and retain highly qualified individuals.

Recommendation Three: Provide High-Quality Teacher Preparation Programs for Every Teacher Candidate

- Prepare increased numbers of highly qualified teachers in critical shortage areas by developing and expanding model programs that are grounded in the realities of schools, address the needs of today's teachers, and produce candidates who have an impact on
- student learning.
- Strengthen measures to ensure that teacher preparation programs are producing the
- high-quality teachers Virginia needs and that the programs are aligned with preK-12
- curriculum and licensure standards.
- Develop an incentive-based funding system that recognizes and rewards teacher
- preparation programs that are responsive to school divisions' needs and demonstrate the
- effectiveness of program completers in enhancing student learning.

Recommendation Four: Expand Efforts to Develop and Retain High-Quality Teachers

- Design, implement, and evaluate a high-quality mentoring program including the development of standards for training mentor teachers, guidelines for implementing mentoring programs, and plans for effective evaluation and monitoring of programs.
- Provide focused professional development that requires an individualized growth plan for teachers and school leaders based on proven professional development practices and identified student needs.
- Ensure that teachers' salaries, benefits, and incentives are competitive in the marketplace and sufficient to retain quality personnel.
- Establish a multi-tiered licensure system that reflects stages in the professional development of teachers and promotes their continuing growth and career options as educators.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive approach to ensure that all schools have a positive work environment and are led by effective principals whose primary role is to create conditions in which teaching and learning thrive.

Recommendation Five: Conduct Research to Design and Evaluate Teacher Quality Initiatives

- Define the most pressing data needs of policymakers, preK-20 administrators and teachers, teacher educators, and other key constituent groups focused on the teaching profession in Virginia.
- Establish, implement, and coordinate a statewide research and evaluation agenda to generate, analyze, and share data to address identified high priority policy and program development needs.
- Foster collaboration among school divisions, colleges and universities, regional and statewide technical assistance providers, professional associations, and regional consortia to promote research on teachers and teaching quality.
- Establish a Center for Research on the Teaching Profession.
- Participate in regional and national teacher quality efforts aligned with Virginia priorities.
- Seek additional funding from the federal government, national organizations, and private foundations to support teacher quality initiatives in Virginia.

The Challenge

The quality of teaching in our classrooms is the most important in-school factor in improving student achievement.

Since July 1, 1995, the Commonwealth of Virginia has been engaged in a comprehensive effort to raise achievement for all students through the adoption of rigorous, grade- and subject-specific Standards of Learning (SOL). Virginia also has implemented an accountability system that measures how well students are meeting the Standards of Learning and how well schools are preparing them to succeed. Virginia's intense focus on raising student achievement through a strong system of standards and accountability has begun to transform its educational system. It also has led policymakers to focus on the most basic resource that students need to succeed—a competent, caring, and qualified teacher. If all students are expected to meet high standards of learning, then all teachers must have the capacity to teach to those standards.

Compelling research supports Virginia's focus on teacher quality. The quality of teaching in our classrooms is the most important in-school factor in improving student achievement. Groundbreaking research in Tennessee and Texas found that students whose initial achievement levels are comparable have vastly different academic outcomes three years later based on the sequence of teachers to which they have been assigned. In addition, the residual effects of both effective and ineffective teachers are measurable two years later. Therefore, there can be no doubt that Virginia's goals for student learning depend on a qualified teaching force that is well prepared and well supported. Federal policymakers also have reached this conclusion with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. Ensuring a highly qualified teacher in every classroom is now the law of the land.

Virginia's teacher quality challenges are threefold:

- Quantity: Virginia must increase and track the number of individuals who enter and remain in the teaching profession in order to staff our schools with adequate numbers of qualified teachers.

- Quality: Virginia clearly cannot sacrifice quality for quantity. Federal law and Virginia's strong accountability system for students require that the state ensures that all teachers are well prepared to teach an increasingly diverse student population to meet the state's high Standards of Learning.

- Equity: Virginia cannot close the state's student achievement gap until the teacher quality gap is closed. Ensuring that poor urban and rural students have equal access to highly qualified teachers must be a priority.

How can policymakers and educators in the commonwealth step up to the plate to address these challenges? The following report and its five recommendations can serve as a blueprint for Virginia to ensure that there is a highly qualified teacher in every classroom.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop a Comprehensive Database to Support Virginia's Commitment to Teacher Quality**
- **Expand Recruitment Initiatives to Attract Competent, Caring, and Qualified Teachers**
- **Provide High-Quality Teacher Preparation Programs for Every Teacher Candidate**
- **Expand Efforts to Develop and Retain High-Quality Teachers**
- **Conduct Research to Design and Evaluate Teacher Quality Initiatives**

The current status of the recommendations, strategies for implementation, and the expected outcomes for each are summarized on the following pages.

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RECOMMENDATION ONE: Develop a Comprehensive Database to Support Virginia's Commitment to Teacher Quality

Current Status

Current and accurate data relating to teachers and teaching practices in the state are essential to the development of effective and sustainable strategies for recruiting, preparing, and retaining highly qualified teachers for each classroom and the ability to link teacher quality with student achievement. However, Virginia's current methods of collecting data are plagued with problems that include the following:

- Fragmented agency responsibility for data collection
- Lack of personal identifiers which are needed to track teachers throughout their careers
- Different schedules of data collection
- Nonstandardized data definitions and lack of uniform reporting by divisions
- No link between teacher preparation databases and those used by the Department of Education

Without sound data and information, Virginia policymakers, educators, and the public will have neither the evidence nor the tools to demand the profound changes necessary for overhauling the current system of recruiting, preparing, licensing, supporting, assessing, retaining, and rewarding our most effective teachers.

Strategies for Implementation of Recommendation

- Collect data on the qualifications of Virginia instructional personnel.
- Collect data that will enable schools and divisions to better understand how to affect teacher retention and effectiveness.
- Access data on the supply of potential teachers.
- Collect data that will enable institutions of higher education and schools and divisions to more effectively predict and respond to potential teacher shortage areas.
- Collect data that will support research efforts to enhance teacher education programs and explore the links between teacher effectiveness and student achievement.
- Require teachers to provide accurate, timely, and current information.

Outcomes

- Teacher shortage areas identified and filled before becoming critical
- Increased teacher diversity
- Increased teacher retention

- Streamlined recruitment and licensure processes
- Increased and more varied career growth and development opportunities
- Identification of factors impacting teacher quality and student learning
- More focused professional development
- A coordinated state approach to preK-20 research on the teaching profession
- Up-to-date, reliable information

RECOMMENDATION TWO: Expand Recruitment Initiatives to Attract Competent, Caring, and Qualified Teachers

Current Status

Virginia faces a severe shortage of teachers. From 2000 to 2015, the commonwealth's supply of teachers is expected to show a 4 percent decline while its student population is expected to grow by 4 percent. Using today's student and teacher populations, this equates to approximately 3,400 fewer teachers for 76,000 additional students.

In 1999, 5,121 first-time teachers were hired in Virginia. During the same year, Virginia colleges and universities graduated approximately 3,900 teachers from their preparation programs. In 2000 the number of graduates dropped to 2,862. Past history indicates that less than half of these remain in the state and not all who remain choose to teach, forcing Virginia to import teachers from other states. In addition, in a 2001 survey, Virginia school divisions reported 4,136 vacancies and teachers teaching outside their area of endorsement, nearly triple the number reported in 1999. Teacher attrition, especially in high-poverty urban and rural communities, and the number of teachers retiring also have added significantly to the teacher shortage. Career switcher and alternate route programs have helped to offset the diminishing numbers of potential teacher applicants, but they are not sufficient.

Furthermore, teachers' salaries in Virginia are not competitive. In 1989-90 the average teacher salary in Virginia ranked third among the 16 member states of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), behind only Maryland and Delaware. A decade later, Virginia's position has fallen to fifth, with North Carolina and Georgia joining Maryland and Delaware with higher salaries.

As a result of these factors, a severe shortage of teachers exists in special education, mathematics, chemistry, physics, earth science, foreign languages, English as a second language, and vocational education. While most Virginia school divisions struggle to find teachers in these critical shortage areas, the schools with high-poverty populations struggle to find qualified teachers in most subjects and grade levels. This problem is especially acute in the remote, rural areas of the state.

Strategies for Implementation of Recommendation

- Develop and implement a statewide marketing plan to attract prospective new candidates and highly qualified teachers into the teaching profession in Virginia.

- Develop a statewide Job Bank and Electronic Hiring Hall that will enable teachers from around the world to post their credentials and inquire about position openings.

- Create partnerships between institutions of higher education and school divisions to develop structured "grow your own" Teach for Tomorrow programs for middle and high school students to explore and enter careers in education.

- Expand and increase support for incentive programs for students who want to teach in one of Virginia's critical shortage areas, males who wish to teach in the elementary or middle grades, and people of color in all teaching fields.

- Expand and increase alternative pathways to teaching.

- Fund compensation and benefits for teachers that will attract and retain highly qualified individuals.

Outcomes

- Increased numbers of middle and high school students interested in teaching

- Increased numbers of highly qualified candidates applying to enter teaching preparation programs

- Virginia's average teacher salary increased to be the highest in the SREB region

- Increased numbers of individuals licensed and teaching in Virginia

RECOMMENDATION THREE: Provide High-Quality Teacher Preparation Programs for Every Teacher Candidate

Current Status

Preparing well-qualified teachers is vital to strengthening the profession. National research indicates that teachers who enter the profession without preparation leave at rates of about 60 percent within the first two years of teaching and produce lower student achievement while they are teachers. In addition, fewer than 30 percent of new teachers report feeling "very well prepared" for the realities of today's classrooms – integrating technology into instruction, meeting the needs of diverse students and those with limited English proficiency, addressing the needs of special education students, and implementing preK-12 student content and performance standards.

Bold new approaches are needed that will accomplish two goals: preparation of highly qualified teachers, particularly for hard-to-staff positions, and preparation of teachers in ways that increase the likelihood they will stay in those positions.

Strategies for Implementation of Recommendation

- Prepare increased numbers of highly qualified teachers in critical shortage areas by developing and expanding model programs that are grounded in the realities of schools, address the needs of today's teachers, and produce candidates who have an impact on student learning.

- Strengthen measures to ensure that teacher preparation programs are producing the high-quality teachers Virginia needs and that the programs are aligned with preK-12 curriculum and licensure standards.

- Develop an incentive-based funding system that recognizes and rewards teacher preparation programs that are responsive to school divisions' needs and demonstrate the effectiveness of program completers in enhancing student learning.

Outcomes

- Teacher preparation programs that have well-structured systems to assess program effectiveness and evaluate candidate performance through the first three years of teaching

- Assessment of program completers' impact on student learning

- Increased numbers of highly qualified teachers in critical shortage teaching areas

- Increased numbers of positions filled with highly qualified, well prepared teachers

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: Expand Efforts to Develop and Retain High-Quality Teachers

Current Status

Retaining highly qualified teachers is the key to maintaining a highly qualified work force. However, nationally, as many as 39 percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years. According to a 1999 United States Department of Education survey, only 19 percent of teachers have been mentored by a veteran teacher in a structured program, even though participation in a mentoring program is known to reduce attrition rates by up to two-thirds. Fewer than 12 percent of public school teachers report that they are "very satisfied" with the level of esteem in which society holds the teaching profession. While increased student enrollments and retirements have contributed to teacher shortages, data indicate that the greatest reason for shortages is teacher turnover. The four reasons most often cited by teachers leaving the profession are low salaries, lack of support from school administrators, student discipline problems, and lack of teacher input into decision making. Additional factors contributing to teacher attrition include lack of opportunities to advance professionally and poor working conditions.

Principals play a critical role in supporting teachers and creating a positive work environment in which teaching and learning can thrive. Current research indicates that effective school leadership is central to teacher retention. In addition, Virginia's focus on the Standards of Learning and raising student achievement means that the role of the building principal has changed. Therefore, principal preparation programs need to prepare leaders who understand instruction and know how to create learning communities in which teachers and students can do their best work.

Adequate compensation is also an important component for retaining qualified teachers. In 2000, Virginia's average per capita income was $1,600 above the national per capita income, yet the average salary paid Virginia classroom teachers was $3,088 below the national average for teachers. In 2001-02, 79 percent of Virginia's school divisions had salaries below $35,000 for teachers with 10 years of experience.

Strategies for Implementation of Recommendation

- Design, implement, and evaluate a high-quality mentoring program including the development of standards for training mentor teachers, guidelines for implementing mentoring programs, and plans for effective evaluation and monitoring of programs.

- Provide focused professional development that requires an individualized growth plan for teachers and school leaders based on proven professional development practices and identified student needs.

- Ensure that teachers' salaries, benefits, and incentives are competitive in the marketplace and are sufficient to retain quality personnel.
- Establish a multi-tiered licensure system that reflects stages in the professional development of teachers and promotes their continuing growth and career options as educators.

- Develop and implement a comprehensive approach to ensure that all schools have a positive work environment and are led by effective principals whose primary role is to create conditions in which teaching and learning thrive.

Outcomes

- A statewide system for developing, implementing, and evaluating mentor programs based upon best practices
- Improved support for new teachers
- A multi-tiered licensure system based on teachers' knowledge, skills, and expertise
- Improved professional development programs
- Increased opportunities for teachers to expand their skills and expertise
- Adequate compensation systems to retain teachers
- Increased retention rates of highly qualified teachers

RECOMMENDATION FIVE: Conduct Research to Design and Evaluate Teacher Quality Initiatives

Current Status

Current research on the teaching profession in Virginia generally lacks the focus, coordination, and scale necessary to impact policy and program development. There is no statewide structure in place to define and fund the comprehensive research needed to address pressing issues of teacher and teaching quality. Existing national and state studies have not provided sufficient or compelling evidence to guide decision making on issues of teacher preparation and teaching quality, particularly as they impact student learning.

Strategies for Implementation of Recommendation

- Define the most pressing data needs of policymakers, preK-20 administrators and teachers, teacher educators, and other key constituent groups focused on the teaching profession in Virginia.
- Establish, implement, and coordinate a statewide research and evaluation agenda to generate, analyze, and share data to address identified high priority policy and program development needs.
- Foster collaboration among school divisions, colleges and universities, regional and statewide technical assistance providers, professional associations, and regional consortia to promote research on teachers and teaching quality.
- Establish and fund a Center for Research on the Teaching Profession.
- Participate in regional and national teacher quality efforts aligned with Virginia priorities.
- Seek additional funding from the federal government, national organizations, and private foundations to support teacher quality initiatives in Virginia.

Outcomes

- Integration and alignment of all Virginia Department of Education, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and Virginia Community College System teacher quality initiatives with key policy priorities
- A comprehensive information system that evaluates the effectiveness of programs that recruit, prepare, and retain teachers
- Increased capacity to link teacher performance to student learning outcomes in order to assess the impact of teacher quality initiatives
- Improved access to research data specific to Virginia to guide policy, funding, and program decisions

Stepping Up to the Plate...Virginia's Commitment to a Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom

Efforts to address teacher quality are not new to the commonwealth. What has been missing, however, is a coherent, comprehensive plan to increase student achievement by enhancing the quality of the teaching force in Virginia. Recognizing this critical need, the Committee to Enhance the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia has created this blueprint to develop an information database; to improve efforts to recruit, prepare, and retain teachers; and to conduct research to design and evaluate teacher quality initiatives.

Virginia's policymakers and educators have been given the challenge. Every student deserves a caring, competent, and highly qualified teacher...

Now is the time for Virginia to step up to the plate.

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